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The Morristown school district had four elementary schools, grades K-8, and a single high school. There were no junior high schools. One elementary school, Lafayette, had 95% Negro population, and the other three had fewer than 10% Negroes each. The education at Lafayette school was generally accepted as inferior to the other schools.

The plan for school desegregation involved the conversion of Lafayette into a badly needed junior high school for seventh- and eighth-grade students. An open enrollment plan with adjustments for overcrowding would be used for distributing students in the three elementary schools. Bus service would be provided for students traveling long distances. An effort was made in Morristown to put the issue before the district's citizens before a decision was made. Although there was some opposition, the plan was decided upon and carried out. Lafayette teachers were arbitrarily distributed in the elementary schools; seventh- and eighth-grade teachers moved to the junior high school. Inservice programs provided technical assistance and consultation for personnel involved in the change. Desegregation was achieved successfully with no major social problems and in an atmosphere in which minor administrative problems could be smoothly solved.

Morristown also initiated a preschool program to provide enrichment experiences for deprived children and their parents, so that the children might better communicate and relate with other children when they entered kindergarten. The program included story hours, picture study, observation room, training in personal cleanliness, and adult education.

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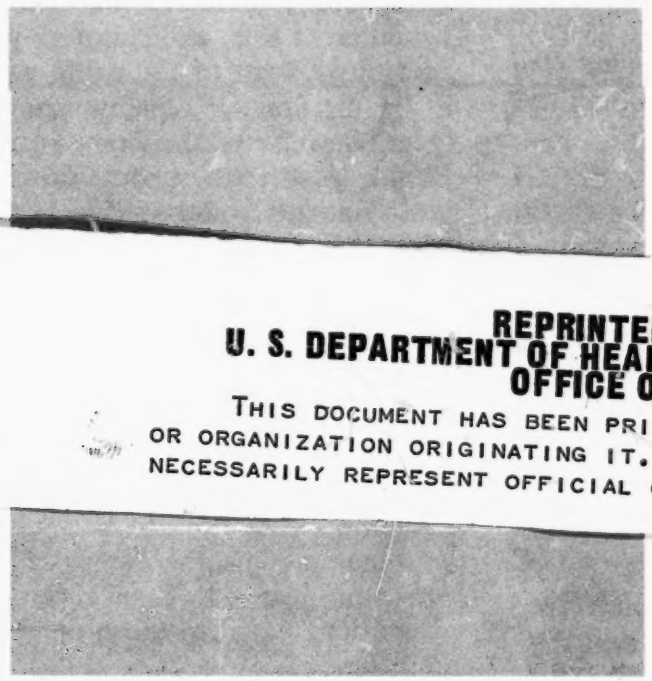
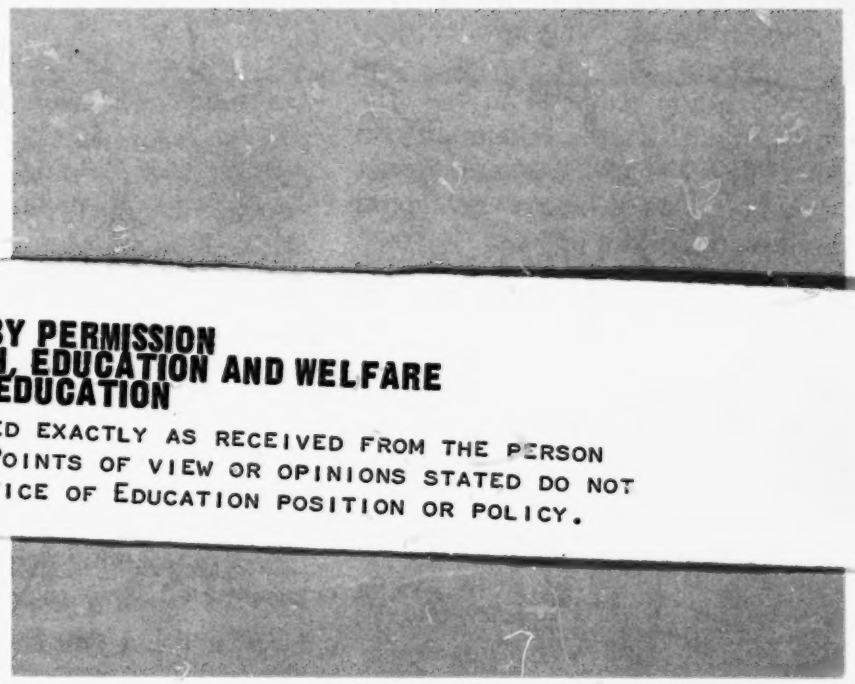
NEW JERSEY--MORRISTOWN

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO SCHOOL MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

WHAT MORRISTOWN, N. J. IS DOING ABOUT DESEGREGATION





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A SCHOOL MANAGEMENT REPRINT

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

Bennett O. Stalvey

Morristown, N.J.

This district closed a predominantly Negro elementary school, refurbished and reopened it as a badly needed junior school.

The situation: The district had four elementary schools for grades K-8 and a single high school. There were no junior high schools. Although about 30% of the district's students were Negro, one school, the Lafayette School, had a 95% Negro population. The other three schools each had fewer than 10% Negro students. There was a general feeling in the district that the education offered at the Lafayette School was not up to that offered at the other three and this was borne out by tests ordered by the school board.

The plan: Convert the Lafayette School into a badly-needed junior school for all seventh and eighth grade students in the district. Redistrict the community so that there would be an almost equal number of Negro students in each of the other schools. In most cases, schools could be provided within walking distance of homes. For students who had to travel long distances to reach school, bus service would be instituted.

Implementation: In Morristown, more than any other community contacted, an effort was made to deliberately put the issue before the district's citizens before a hard and fast decision was made. To find out why Morristown chose this tactic, how it implemented it, and what the results were, SCHOOL MANAGEMENT editors interviewed Superintendent Harry Wenner. Excerpts from that tape-recorded session are presented here.

Q. Why was the desegregation issue put before the community before a definite decision was made by the board, Dr. Wenner?

A. We felt that we would greatly reduce the chance of a serious public disturbance by bringing the whole issue out in the open before a single set plan was selected. We thought it necessary to create an atmosphere of candor and free discussion in which everyone could have his say. Actually the board was already leaning pretty strongly toward the plan we did adopt, but you can't handle an issue as big as this autocratically without getting into trouble. A period of public discussion and consultation can take the pressure off. The public is far more likely to view any decision by the board more favorably if it feels it has been consulted before hand, rather than ignored.

Q. Did you have a particular plan in mind, right from the beginning?

A. We were working on three possibilities. Plan A was a modified open enrollment plan. This would have allowed parents freedom of school choice, though we would have reserved the right to adjust any overcrowding or under-utilization of facilities. Plan B proposed a single integrated junior school for all seventh and eighth grades. Negro children in grades K-6 could then be distributed equally in the three remaining schools. Plan C combined these two alternatives.

Q. How did you choose one?

A. We presented all three plans for public examination and comment. We discussed them with PTA groups, in special public meetings, at board meetings and in consultations with Negro leaders. We offered to hear any group's opinions and there were plenty of opinions to hear. We asked people to write their own plans or to amend ours. Our community relations aide wrote three articles for the newspaper, explaining how the plans would work and pointing out their relative merits and drawbacks.

In the end, however, the board made up its *own* mind. The decision was based on two rational considerations. First, which plan would work best in Morristown? Second, which plan was most fair? It was perfectly obvious to the board that the answer to both questions was Plan C.

Q. Basically, what is the plan?

A. The plan was to close down the K-8 Lafayette school, the all-Negro school, refurbish and reoutfit it during the summer, and reopen it the following fall as a junior school. The other three schools would go to K-6, and children who previously went to Lafayette were to be distributed equally among them. Because of the shape of the former Lafayette school district, most students could still go to the school nearest their homes up to the sixth grade. But for a few of the Negro children, transportation would have to be provided. We also would have to bus some students to the junior school. All four schools were to be painted and touched up. And it appeared that the educational program might need to be revised to accommodate the Negro children who had not been receiving educations equal to those of white children.

Q. When the fact that this plan had been chosen was made public, what was the reaction?

A. There was opposition. Previously, each plan had its stout adherents and vigorous assailants and not a few citizens were critical of any change whatsoever. When a definite plan had been chosen, it became a target of just about everybody who hadn't backed it originally. For a time, we were even faced with the possibility of a ref-

THE MORRISTOWN PLAN AND TIMETABLE

■ Resolved, that the Morristown Board of Education hereby adopts the plan, submitted and recommended by the superintendent, to assign all pupils in the seventh and eighth grades to Lafayette School. All pupils in the kindergarten through the sixth grade are assigned to George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson Schools. Redistribution of pupils is effective for the 1962-63 school year.

This plan is to be implemented as follows:
The Superintendent is hereby directed to report to the Board his recommendations on the following items:

1. A reasonable policy for transporting pupils to and from schools distant from their homes. This should include procedure, route schedules, and cost approximation. Due date: March 1st.
2. Reassignment of teachers and other staff members to meet personnel requirements in the reorganized grade groupings. Due date. March 1st.
3. Redistribution of existing instructional materials, educational equipment, and classroom furniture to meet the change in grade groupings in the four elementary schools. Due date: May 1st.
4. Development of an educational plan for the complete kindergarten through eight grades. Due date: May 1st.
5. A carefully supervised Spring (1962) testing program to be administered to all pupils in the four elementary schools. Due date: April 1st.
6. Plans for an in-service training program to provide technical and consultative assistance to all personnel involved in the change. Due date: April 1st.
7. A series of press releases to be prepared to inform the public of the policies and rules governing school assignments and other procedures relative to the change. Due date: Information to be ready for release as directed by the Board.

Action of the Board: Unanimous
19 February '62

erendum. But the board simply took the attitude that it had been elected by the community to make a decision, and make it it would.

Q. What steps did you take to insure the plan's acceptance?

A. The board moved so rapidly and efficiently that the opposition never had a chance to really organize. From the moment it first recognized the problem until the plan was finally implemented, the board never stopped moving toward a solution. It made decisions positively. It gathered the support of ministers and priests, community leaders and politicians, and the working press. In the crucial period following the decision to use Plan C, the newspaper editorialized in favor of the decision. A series was run on what was happening in a neighboring community where desegregation had been allowed to become a problem. Influential parts of the community came out in support of the plan.

Q. In other words, most of the community favored desegregation?

A. That may have been true, but we didn't present this plan only as a way to desegregate. A key part of our strategy was to focus attention on improvements that would be made in the *educational program* as a result of these changes. We talked about departmentalization, a new language program, more and better materials, and other modernizing innovations that were to be effected. We emphasized the advantages of the new 6-2-4 set-up over the more rigid 8-4. We concentrated on the excellent physical adaptability of Lafayette School as a junior school. At the end of the year we even had an open house in the building to show off the alterations and the paper ran a series on the school, its history and future.

Of course, we also emphasized the fact that this plan would give us an excellent solution to the problem of desegregation with a minimum of confusion, inconvenience and expense. We published percentages of Negroes in the various schools and what the percentages would be after integration. Primarily, though, we concentrated on the improvements in the program. People just couldn't argue with reasonable class sizes, good physical plant and improved instruction.

Q. In the face of opposition, you could have waited until February to implement Plan C rather than moving ahead immediately in September. Why didn't you?

A. The summer break was a natural period of transition. It was more natural to make the switch after a pause in the year than to make it right in the middle of a period of study. And, there really wasn't that much work to be done to justify a delay. We had to develop an acceptable transportation policy, consolidate the junior school staff and program and reassign the Lafayette teachers. We had

to start up an in-service program to provide technical assistance and consultation for all personnel involved in the change and we had to order and stock new instructional materials for the schools. Finally, we had to administer a city-wide testing program to facilitate regrouping of students in every school. We had all spring and summer to do this work. More important, we had made the decision, taken the initiative and *built up momentum*. The majority of the community was with us and we had to keep moving before hard-rock resistance could organize into an obstructive unit. It just made good sense to keep moving. I think if we had stopped and waited, we might still be bogged down.

Q. Did you do anything to ease the change for parents and students?

A. We had the open house at Lafayette in late May. After that, we took all sixth and seventh grade students, who would attend Lafayette the following fall, on a tour of the building and explained what junior school would be like. The board asked the PTA units to take over orienting the parents. Through the PTAs, we explained how the redistribution would work. The Lafayette PTA took the lead in bringing other units to the school and showing them around. And the units of the other schools made arrangements to make the parents of former Lafayette students feel welcome.

Q. How about teachers—what was involved in their changeover?

A. The K-6 teachers from Lafayette weren't given an opportunity to request transfers to particular schools. We just arbitrarily assigned them as needed. The seventh and eighth grade teachers from the other elementary schools, of course, just moved over to Lafayette. We closed all elementary schools three days early in June, which gave us a chance to help our staff get prepared, mentally and physically, for the shift. Then, in the fall, we opened elementary schools a week late, for new and old teachers' orientation. There really was no problem.

Administratively, the situation was somewhat more complicated. We were still operating in the same system, of course, so we just merged our records and re-established our "nerve center" in the junior school. We had to tighten up and departmentalize the junior school program and redevelop the schedule accordingly. Each of the principals stayed in his own school. They worked closely together during the summer, regrouping every class in every school. They used the spring test results and also their own and their teachers' knowledge of the students, to get a good grouping. We wanted to have an equal balance of Negro students in every school. And we wanted to distribute the known problem children among the schools so no one school would be loaded down with them. When this job was completed, we notified the parents of Lafayette children of their school assignments. Most of the other K-6 students continued going to their neighborhood schools.

Finally, the central office was responsible for working out the transportation arrangements. We decided that all students in grades K-6, who lived more than three-quarters of a mile from their school were eligible for bus transportation. All seventh and eighth graders residing a mile or more from school were eligible. After ironing out these details we were all ready.

Q. What happened on the first day of school?

A. Everything moved like clockwork. Bus transportation worked well, students went to the right schools. There were no federal troops, no policemen—not even any parents. We had prepared well enough beforehand to avoid all problems on the big day. I don't mind admitting, though, that all of us were keyed up by the time that day rolled around.

Q. You've admitted that students in the segregated Lafayette School were receiving poor educations. Have you been forced to dilute the educational program to compensate for this?

A. Evidence so far indicates that the program has been a *stimulus* to students from Lafayette school. Some youngsters who were in the lower quarter of Lafayette classes are now in the top quarter in their new schools. Every single Lafayette youngster has made some improvement, great or small. And the youngsters who had been in the top quarter of all the other schools are still performing exactly as predicted.

Q. Socially, have there been any problems resulting from desegregation.

A. Nothing major. We have had some difficulty with parents and children concerning altercations that occur going to and from school. And we have disturbed kids in our population—white and colored—just as any community does, who have caused some trouble. By and large, though, no real problems have resulted.

Q. In other words, desegregation in Morristown has been a complete success?

A. Yes. Definitely. This isn't to say that there are no problems in the educational program, or in the transportation system, or in class grouping, or any of the other areas you have to consider. There have been—and still are—kinks that must be ironed out. You have to figure on a period of adjustment. However, you can't judge the success of desegregation by the number of minor problems you have. You judge it by whether or not you've created the kind of atmosphere in which these adjustments can be made smoothly without upset to community or students.

Q. How much has desegregation added to the cost of running your school district?

A. $25,000 for transportation the first year; this year that's been reduced to $18,000. All the other improvements and changes were either budgeted for the school year or just didn't cost anything. When you spread the cost for transportation over the whole community, it's a nominal price to pay for peaceful, successful desegregation of the school system. I know one thing: if this community had delayed desegregation—if the school board had failed to move positively before pressure got too great—it would have cost the community far more in loss of prestige, self-respect, and new industries and businesses. From this point of view, peaceful desegregation was the most profitable action taken by this community in many years.

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PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR DEPTRIVED CHILDREN

PURPOSE

A school-community project designed to provide enriching experiences for four year old children and their parents to insure that the children will be able to communicate and relate with other children when they enter the Kindergarten.

(See attached philosophy and objectives)

PLACE

Housing Authority Project - Clyde Potts Drive
Basement areas of one of the large units can be converted into an attractive, desirable center.

PERSONNEL

Coordinator: An experienced, professional person who has a background of any or all of the following:

A. Elementary School Administrator
B. Social Worker who has had supervisory experience
C. Director of a Nursery School
D. Coordinator of community youth and/or recreational activities
E. Any other experiences which have resulted in the individual working directly with parents, young people and community agencies

NOTE: It is imperative that this program begin at once (Fall 1964) if it is to be of benefit to the children who will be entering the Morristown Kindergarten Program, Fall 1965

CONSULTANTS

Morristown Public School specialists including the Elementary Specialist, Psychologist, Social Worker and Assistant Superintendent.

GROUP LEADERS

Retired teachers, college students, high school students, adult volunteers.

PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR DEPRIVED CHILDREN

PHILOSOPHY

Many young children entering Kindergarten from underprivileged homes appear to be mentally deficient because of the lack of ability to communicate or to relate to the school environment.

However, this lack of ability is often the result of inadequate environmental experiences rather than actual mental inability.

We believe that these children, given an opportunity for enriching experiences, can enter Kindergarten ready to communicate and relate in a normal fashion.

OBJECTIVES

To provide experiences where children will have the opportunity and guidance to-

1. listen
2. observe
3. talk
4. discuss
5. plan

To promote guidance for adults in helping them understand the importance of-

1. personal cleanliness
2. good toilet habit
3. nutrition (especially a good breakfast)
4. regular school attendance
5. regular friendly conversation between little children and parents
6. reading good literature to children often
7. taking children to see many kinds of things and places

MATERIALS

Newberry & Caldecott Award Story books for Small Children

Finger Plays

Story Records (chosen carefully for diction and content)

Live animals, birds, plants, etc.

File of pictures for language development

- Babies
- Homes
- Family Fun
- Fathers
- Mothers
- Children and their activities
- Kinds of work
- Kinds of transportation
- Colors
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Meats

METHODS

1. Story hour
   Listening to stories well told or read
   Discussing pictures in detail
   Recalling content
   Talking about characters, etc.
2. Picture study to -
   Develop close observation
   Develop new vocabulary
   Give understanding and a speaking knowledge about many new areas of living
3. Training in
   Washing, wiping hands
   Correct use of toilet facilities
4. Observation Room
   Hen and chicks (eggs hatched)
   Rabbits and young
   Turtles
   Birds
   Hamster, etc.
   Growing things
   Children have opportunity to look and look
   Someone handy who can answer questions and get them to talk and look
5. Adult Education class to promote objectives set forth above

OUTCOMES

Better knowledge of and willingness to assume responsibility for child development by parents
Growth in ability of children to -
   observe the world about them
   express their thoughts verbally
   speak correctly (enunciation, mainly)
   relate pleasantly to the world and people they contact daily
   care for their personal needs in a worthy fashion

EVALUATION

Amount of participation in project shown by
   parent cooperation in sending children
   parent cooperation in adult classes
   children in group sessions provided
Readiness of children entering Kindergarten who have had this program. They should be <u>better</u> able to -
   communicate (talk freely about selves and world about them)
   speak correctly
   relate to others
   care for personal health needs